Tear Drop

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/17323868.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham & Abigail Hobbs & Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham's Dogs, Abigail Hobbs, Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham
Additional Tags:	Not Beta Read, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Christmas, Hannibal is Hannibal, Established Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Murder Family, POV Abigail Hobbs, Food is Not People, Will finds out something
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of When things go according to plan (and when they don't)
Stats:	Published: 2019-01-06 Words: 2,334 Chapters: 1/1

Tear Drop

by killers_on_mondays (orphan_account)

Summary

Abigail indeed stays for Christmas.

Notes

First of all, thanks to Cinnamaldeide for providing me with inspiration for the meal. I wish I could have made it fancier.
I've been working on this for several days now and I don't have the energy to edit anymore. So if you spot mistakes, please be so kind and point them out. (2332 words)

When Will opened the door with one of the brightest smiles she had ever seen on his face, Abigail understood why Hannibal had insisted so much on her visit.

And with the dogs spilling out of the door and circling her, offering themselves to be pet, she was almost convinced that they could do normal.

Will clicked is tongue to rein them in and offered to take her luggage upstairs. She agreed to it; it was only prudent to greet Hannibal as well and god knows if she still could after setting foot in her room. The exhaustion must be etched into her face by now.

"Abigail, it's good to have you here again." Unsurprisingly, he was in the kitchen. Preparing dinner and perhaps even the food for the coming two days. "I see the dogs have already enthusiastically welcomed you."

"Yes, I couldn't have stopped them even if I wanted to." She spotted the lint roller which someone had carelessly tossed on the armchair. "Do you need a sous-chef?"

"I appreciate the proposal, nonetheless, I have to decline. You're our guest." Of course, there was more to it than pure hospitality but she didn't find it in her to mind and simply left him to his work while she braced herself for the questions he would inevitably nag her with later this evening.

Until then she chose to stay in the living room for a bit; it had become quite homely after some redecorating was done when they lived together. It felt like ages ago and she realised how long she actually hadn't been there when she noticed the new carpet and gave into the temptation to nudge it with her foot. "What happened to the old one?"

Next to her, Will frowned at first and Abigail was ready to ask if something was wrong, then he answered dryly: "The cleaning service couldn't get the blood stains out."

There must have been something wrong with her; *she laughed*.

And again Will frowned but joined in soon enough, which left Abigail wondering whether the glass of whisky was his first. He looked so relaxed. Not twitchy.

He asked how she was doing at university, if she liked Belgium.

He taught her some more curse words she could confuse her fellow students with.

He offered her a sip fully aware that Hannibal would smell it later on who indeed scrunched up his nose when she passed him while setting the table, nonetheless, he didn't comment.

A five course meal wasn't something the average family indulged in even on Christmas but compared to everything that had happened when they met, before they met and after they

met, *what had happened mere months ago*, the evening was pure domesticity. One that the Abigail who wasn't around anymore deserved and the conflicting thoughts began to float to the surface but she weighed them down lest anybody could make out their shape because this was neither the place nor time.

When either Will or Hannibal enquired about her everyday life, she put her whole mind to it; when they didn't, she focused on the food instead.

Hot tomato soup with pepper and garlic, garnished with shredded celery.

Rucola and prawn salad.

Smallmouth bass in a salt crust with caramelised tomatoes.

Yorkshire Wensleydale, mozzarella and Pepper Jack.

Truffle ice cream with bergamot oranges.

Bitterness.

The taste lingered despite her vigorous teeth scrubbing and the mouthwash she found in the bathroom cabinet. Even in the morning she could swear she still made out the faint traces of it, which somehow overshadowed the rosemary in her scrambled eggs and didn't leave no matter how much hot chocolate she gulped down.

"Hey, easy there." Will gave her a look over the rim of his coffee mug, sitting opposite he couldn't have not noticed how frenzied she was. (Perhaps he could, sometimes he seemed to vacate his body and only returned once Hannibal got his hands on him.) "We have all the time in the world, Abigail."

She wasn't sure about that but smiled sheepishly at him anyway. "It's good and that makes it hard to resist gorging myself on it."

"An epicurean approach to it would be far more sensible," Hannibal said yet acquiesced when she wordlessly requested a second helping. "The weasel would not chance it to let a stuffed mouse slip by."

"The weasel merely mocked the mouse in the original tale," Will countered.

"In reality the weasel would not go against its nature."

"Since it doesn't have a choice. People do."

“I’ve thought we have established that we belong to different schools of thought in regard to that.”

He snorted, which was one of those things Hannibal let only him get away with. “Yeah, wouldn’t serve the divine if humans could rebel against their self. Could I have more coffee too, please?”

Hannibal complied and Abigail averted her eyes; it was always awkward to witness such mundane gestures when they injected so much more touch in those interactions than it was in any case necessary.

Breakfast was drawn out to almost noon and she had no clue how (although it was her own fault) she was supposed to eat anything more this day and maybe until the next year as well. The somewhat oppressive heat in the living room didn’t ease her discomfort and she distantly mused about the deliberation of it. Even more so the moment Will decided to get rid of his sweater.

“So, uh, who wants to go first?”

“You should, Will, you seem anxious. Participating leaves less room for fretting in your case.”

And that apparently convinced him as he began to gingerly rip off the blue marbled paper.

“Aftershave?” He turned to Hannibal, eyebrows raised.

“While I am flattered that you like my scent enough to apply it to yourself, I wish there were no need to constantly replace the bottle.”

A mischievous glint Abigail had never seen before sneaked into his eyes upon sniffing at the spray nozzle. “It’s not the same label but it smells the same.” He took another whiff. “More or less.”

Like an owner proud of its pet having learnt a new trick, Hannibal regarded him. “They do have indeed similar top notes and share a heart note as well but the base notes are rather different.”

Will, however, remained sceptical. “Ah. Will I notice eventually?”

“It might take at least 30 minutes since the heart notes need to fade first.” They leaned into each other more and she concentrated even harder on stroking Zoe’s fur. When it became clear that they wouldn’t part anytime soon she interrupted their moment:

“Uh, I brought something too.”

While Hannibal tracked her movements with a steady gaze, Will was evidently embarrassed and trained his eyes on the package in his hands. “Thanks, Abigail.”

“Maybe say that after you’ve seen it.”

It was nothing fancy but the joy streaking his features when he lifted the lid was even more than she had hoped for. (She could cling to it should Hannibal be inevitably disappointed by his.) “They are beautiful.” He gave the feathers a reverent stroke. “Thank you.”

“I think it is only appropriate that Abigail gets to open hers now in return.” She wasn’t certain she agreed with that but she took the box Hannibal held out to her anyway.

Half of the present was always a scarf and she had yet to discern whether it was aimed to needle her or just an expression of his skewed sense of humour. She opened it and yes, it was a scarf.

A red one. Some shade of carmine.

The other half of the gift was a pocket knife. Blade, corkscrew, multi-purpose hook.

She began to lean more towards skewed sense of humour.

If she was honest with herself, she could admit that it was a beautiful one: a bright red handle with a stylised pig’s head on one side and on the other the emblem of the brand.

“You said knife, not multi-tool,” Will remarked over her shoulder.

“It is a knife.”

“Is it a problem?”

“No, not really. Just—” He shot a glare towards Hannibal. “Perhaps unwrap your other gift.”

The other one was simpler: striped paper, a simple bow on top and her name on a tag with black ink. Underneath was a sleek, unassuming wood case. Pliers, tweezers and screwdrivers snugly nestled in foam.

“Not a problem. Thank you.” And because she knew that he would appreciate it, she hugged him to punctuate her words. Will appeared taken aback for a second, then he held her firmly just shy of squeezing. Like a life jacket.

When they parted she noticed the amused quirk to Hannibal’s lips, which made her curious what he inferred from the gesture. She considered asking him later, as soon as Will was out of earshot.

Suddenly, a sound pierced the soft silence and a miniscule frown replaced his expression of entertainment.

“That’s *your* phone, Hannibal.”

Abigail guessed that it had to be some kind of emergency; no one called him *just because*. It must have crossed his mind too although it didn’t seem to lessen his annoyance. Still, he simply excused himself and took the call.

Zoe came back to scramble into her lap and Buster took it as invitation to spread himself on her thighs as good as he could as well. Ellie, sensing that Abigail didn’t care about all the dog hair shed on her clothing, drew closer, didn’t attempt to climb on top of her however and Winston was also content to just remain by her side.

“Hey, can I get you something to drink as well?”

She nodded; the dogs’ proximity didn’t help with the heat she had barely adjusted to. “Do we have schorle or plain water?”

“Don’t know about plain but I’m sure there is some in the pantry,” he replied and left for the kitchen. She let out the breath she wasn’t aware she had held; so far it went better than she had anticipated, nonetheless, she had to watch her step. It wouldn’t do her any good to fall out of favour. For a precious minute or two, she allowed the presence of the pack calm her though. They liked her and they would like her no matter what, of course. Winston, Zoe, Ellie, Buster, Max, Jack and Harley. Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad to take Winston—

“Here we go.” Will’s voice startled her out of her reverie. (It was only a pipe dream; she understood what she had to do.) The water bottle was cool against her finger tips and it distantly reminded her of the moment she had to move the dead body of—

Later. She could have her big freak-out later.

“It was a patient emergency by the way.” He sloshed some dark liquid in his glass. *More whisky*. Did he pick up her nervousness? “Kissed me goodbye and said he’ll be back as soon as possible.”

“That doesn’t sound fun.”

“It probably isn’t.”

She observed him, then decided to ask what has been on her mind for some time. “Are you glad you quit?”

“I, I don’t want to say… You see, I’ve been doing good with this work. I was saving lives. Hypothetical victims but the Damocles sword over their heads was very real and I helped them avoid their potential fate. It was good and it was important.” He took a sip. “But since I stopped the nightmares became manageable and I am glad for it. I can teach without Jack Crawford busting into my classroom and dismissing my students all the time. No Zeller and Price throwing side glances my way.”

“Is it as good as it was before you started?”

At that Will grinned. “I have now a shrink as a husband; in the eyes of the rest of the world that is an improvement to before.”

“Are the people from the opera included in ‘the rest of the world’?”

“Are you that doubtful of my ability to be social?”

“Obviously not. If Bundy could fake it, so can you!”

He flinched at the comparison despite her utmost diligence to intone it in good humour. Now that she thought about it, she wasn’t certain where that had even come from. It could be the house. Or her company. Or those eight months she couldn’t look away and all of the subsequent events, which made ‘serial killers’ the first thing her brain jumped to.

Her face must have given it away because Will lost most of the previous tension and asked in his *more understanding than is healthy* tone:

“How did you sleep last night?”

And that was it. She tipped over the edge and told him, albeit vaguely, about the nightmare she couldn’t discuss with anyone.

The corpse thawing in her house and the flies buzzing. The eternal echo of them telling her that they knew. That she was his father’s daughter.

It was all it took for the pieces to slide into place.

(Abigail had often wondered if Will was like her mother, blind until it was too late. Confronted with the reality she came to the conclusion that the opposite might be just worse.)

Except for one.

“You didn’t drag a body through the woods in Minnesota all alone. You didn’t survive for this and you understood that it wasn’t what you were supposed to do—”

He seemed to replay the information he had gathered years ago behind his eyes.

“—But you didn’t know what else to do so you did what he told you to.”

She whispered, too afraid of the answer. “What does that mean for us?”

Will shook his head. “I need to think.”

It occurred to Abigail that she should tell Hannibal. If she told him that Will had figured it out, there would be still hope. They loved each other and she was sure (because there was no other way) not all was for show on Hannibal’s part.

No one had to die.

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